Why Gender Matters when Developing Post Harvest Technologies

RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Roots, Tubers and Bananas

CASE #1 Women prefer sweetpotato technologies that they can manage without depending on men

A project in Tanzania introduced pit storage and storage granary structures as two reliable technologies to store sweetpotato roots and extend their shelf life. A formative evaluation study showed that men and women had different views and opinions about their ability to adopt these technologies.

Men only mentioned cash related constraints for adoption while women observed diverse obstacles including: lack of construction materials such as trees for roofing difficulty in fetching sand which is obtained far from the village, dependence on the construction skills of men for construction of the stores, roofing and maintenance of the structures as well as concerns about the security of the crop when stored outside the family's living space.

Women were afraid that since men have a low regard for sweetpotato, they may refuse to support them in constructing the stores which would divert women's meagre resources towards hiring male labourers for construction of storage structures. Instead women preferred to store sweetpotato inside the home where they could keep an eye on it. They preferred chipping and sundrying the sweetpotato and storing the dried chips in their house because they could control the process themselves without depending on men. They suggested solar driers as a much-preferred technology.

CASE #2 Women are limited in implementing technology that is capital or labour intensive

Ridge planting is one of the techniques demonstrated in farmer group gardens by a CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) project in Uganda to extend the shelf life of cassava.

Although both men and women expressed great interest in ridge planting, men were quicker to adopt ridging than women. Ridging is labour intensive and hard work especially in the dry season and may requires support from casual labourers who are expensive and at times difficult to find. As men control marketed crops and income, they can more easily invest and experiment with new practices and technologies, while female cassava farmers lack funds to pay labourers to undertake the activity.

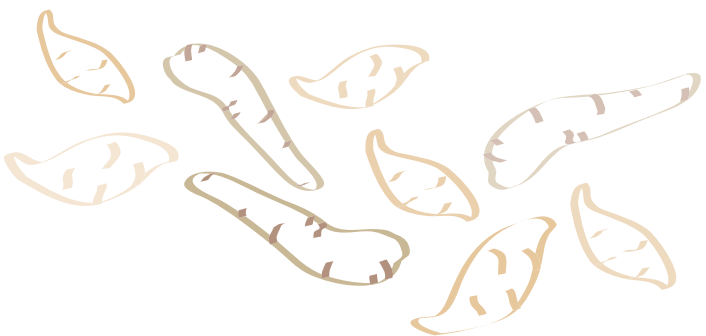
If men learn of a method that gives more profit and that there is a market for the produce they can help because they will see that there is a lot to benefit. (Rwibare women)

Women did adopt quickly other technologies that were less capital intensive, like pruning. Though both technologies are beneficial, ridging is likely to yield more economic benefits for farmers, which implies that female farmers' productivity may lag behind.

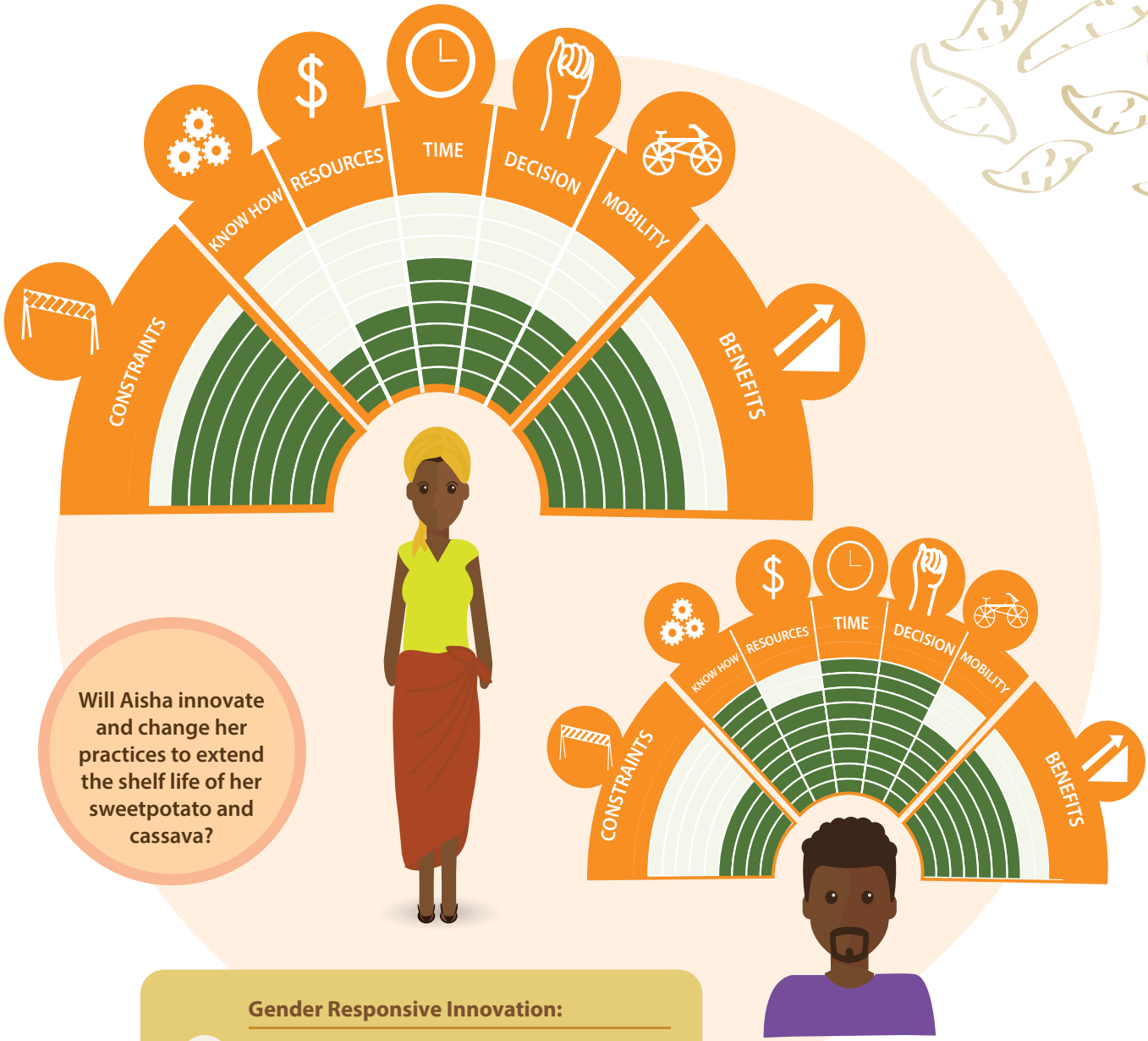
Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Technology Development

Technology Development

- Technologies should be co-developed with scientists as well as male and female users of the technologies to ensure that they do not reinforce or reproduce gender inequalities.
- Gender responsive technology development calls for a change in the mindset of the developers so as to design technologies that address priorities and constraints of men and women farmers and other end users.
- To design effective technologies it is important to conduct a gender analysis to understand who does what, who decides what, who loses and who benefits from changes.
- Both men and women in a farmer household should participate in technology trials as well as demonstration plots to ensure that both their needs and interests are recognised and taken into account during technology development and adaptation.
- Assess what the costs and benefits of technnology change for men, women and youth are before implementing or rolling-out a new technology or innovation.



Gender Responsive Technology Development



Gender Responsive Innovation:

1. Responds to constraints women and men face.
2. Takes into account resources and power relations within households and communities.
3. Focuses on improving benefits for women and men.

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